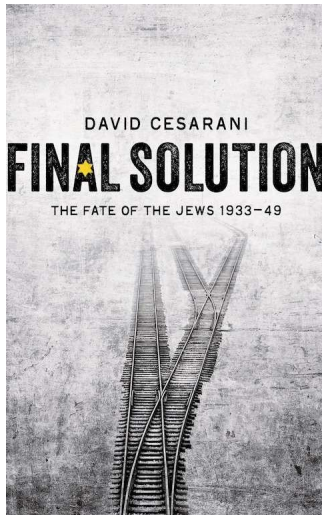


# Half-Way Revisionism: David Cesarani's Last Stand

[Panagiotis Heliotis](#)



David Cesarani (1956-2015) was an English historian specializing in Jewish history. He held posts at various universities including the University of Leeds, the University of Southampton and the University of London. This article will deal with his swan song—the book *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933-1949* (Macmillan, 2016).

At more than 1,000 pages, this is a work that clearly rivals Raul Hilberg's magnum opus. And taking on such an oeuvre seems like a David-vs-Goliath contest. Nevertheless, we will stay the course! Contents are as follows:

Prologue

One THE FIRST YEAR 1933

Two JUDENPOLITIK 1934–1938

Three POGROM 1938–1939

Four WAR 1939–1941

Five BARBAROSSA 1941

Six FINAL SOLUTION 1942

Seven TOTAL WAR 1943

Eight THE LAST PHASE 1944–1945

Epilogue

Conclusion

So, in a new book about the Holocaust, two basic questions come to mind: Why did the author write it and what does he have to say about the extermination of the Jews? Let's examine these questions.

### **Why This Book?**

In the Introduction Cesarani first makes the following remark:

*"However there is a yawning gulf between popular understanding of this history and current scholarship on the subject. This is hardly surprising given that most people acquire their knowledge of the Nazi past and the fate of the Jews through novels, films, or earnest but ill-informed lessons at school, which frequently rely on novels for young adults or their filmic versions. Misconceptions are reinforced by the edited and instrumentalized versions purveyed by campaigning bodies and the constellation of organizations devoted to education and commemoration. Although these efforts are made in good faith, they are subordinate to extraneous agendas, be it the desire to cultivate an inclusive national identity or the laudable determination to combat anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia and other forms of political, religious or ethnic intolerance." (p. xxv)*

Then he explains his reasons as follows:

*"This book grew out of a concern about the discord between, on the one side, evocations of The Holocaust in popular culture, education and its commemoration and, on the other, the revelations by researchers in many disciplines, operating within and outside an academic framework." (p. xxviii)*

In other words, let's set the record straight. But does this mean we can expect any kind of revisions of the official story? Actually, yes:

*"Unlike most previous narratives, this account contests whether Nazi anti-Jewish policy was systematic, consistent or even premeditated. [...] While it is possible to locate programmatic statements from key players, particularly in the SS, there was no overall, centralized, coherent policy or practice until late 1938. While there may have been a broad anti-Semitic consensus within the Nazi movement and throughout the institutions of government, and even if policy tended in one direction towards ever-harsher measures, this does not mean that one thing led to another logically, necessarily, or even deliberately." (p. xxxi)*

As a matter of fact, Cesarani is even more explicit. He writes that it was the **course of the war** rather than any preconceived plan that triggered the descent into a Europe-wide genocide (p. xxxvi). But then an obvious question arises: Would there still have been a genocide if the Germans were victorious? Cesarani ignored such a question. So let's move on with what he has to say about the Holocaust.

### **The Plan**

As we can see, Cesarani begins his narrative by going all the way back to 1933, and his first remark regarding Hitler's policy towards the Jews is as follows:

*"Hitler's priority on taking office was to make good his promise to repair the economy and restore national unity. Terminating parliamentary democracy was both a means to this end and a fundamental Nazi objective. Hitler did little that appeared immediately relevant to Germany's Jews as Jews. The drastic restrictions on individual rights and the extension of police powers seemed more to do with*

*political warfare. In those first heady weeks there was nothing to suggest that the state posed a threat to innocent citizens who belonged to an innocuous religious minority.” (p. 35)*

After this, the book focuses on the various forms of persecution, the laws, the expulsions, the ghettos, the confiscations and such, where Cesarani gives quite a few details, and finally of course, the plan to expel all of the Jews from Europe. Regarding this, he writes:

*“On 25 May 1940, Heinrich Himmler submitted to Hitler a memorandum entitled ‘Some Thoughts on the Treatment of the Alien Population in the East’. It contained his suggestions for the Germanization of annexed Poland. Himmler recommended that the indigenous population should be reorganized into ethnic categories, although no national consciousness should be permitted. Small minorities of all these peoples could be used to provide mayors and local police officials; Poles should receive only the most elementary education. They should be taught simple arithmetic and basic religious precepts such as ‘God’s commandment to be obedient to the Germans’. Children ‘of our blood’, opined Himmler, should be taken to the Reich where they would be raised as members of the Volk, whether their parents agreed or otherwise. The ‘inferior remnant’ would end up in the General Government, where it would provide a reservoir of cheap, unskilled labour. Some ethnic groups would simply disappear. Significantly, he mentioned, as an aside, that this would be the fate of the Jews. ‘I hope to see the term “Jew” completely eliminated through the possibility of large-scale emigration of all Jews to Africa or to some colony.” (p. 299)*

He continues:

*“Hans Frank was informed of the project by Hitler personally on 8 July 1940. He was thrilled at the thought, not least because the prospect of an imminent solution meant that Hitler agreed to suspend further deportations of Jews into his domain. A few days later Frank reported to his subordinates in Cracow, ‘It is planned after the peace to transport the whole Jewish gang from the Reich, the General Government, and the Protectorate as soon as possible to some African or American colony. Madagascar, which France would have given up for this purpose, is what is foreseen ... I shall try to arrange that the Jews from the General Government are also able to make use of this chance to build their own life for themselves in this territory.’ The Madagascar project therefore had an immediate effect in Poland.” (p. 301)*

And later:

*“Ribbentrop met Hitler on 17 September and proposed that Germany retaliate by uprooting the Jews of central Europe to the eastern territories. Thus, between 15 and 17 September, Hitler finally ordered the deportation of Jews from the Reich and the Protectorate. The solution of the Jewish problem would go ahead regardless of what transpired on the eastern front. As he had predicted: the Jews would pay.” (p. 423)*

Very well. So how did this evolve into the Holocaust as we know it? For answers, we turn to Chapter Six on the Final Solution (p. 450) where Cesarani begins with a discussion of the Wannsee Conference:

*“However, Heydrich then reverted to more prosaic matters. Drawing on a statistical summary drafted by Eichmann, he gave a ‘review of the struggle conducted up to now against this foe’. That is to say, he gave an overview of the development of Judenpolitik in the Third Reich from social and economic exclusion to forcing Jews out of German living space. It was as if he went back to reading from a script*

*that had been composed only about Jews in the Reich. As he explained, accelerated emigration had been the 'only possible provisional solution' and it was taken in hand by the Sipo-SD through the central emigration office for the Reich. Despite various difficulties, over 530,000 Jews had departed legally from Germany, Austria and the Protectorate. But with the coming of war, forced emigration had run its course. It was to be replaced by 'evacuation of the Jews to the East, as a further possible solution, with the appropriate prior authorization by the Führer'." (p. 455)*

As expected, it doesn't take long for him to play the well-worn code-language card:

*"Jews would be 'utilized for work in the east', gathered into large labour columns segregated by gender, and deployed for road construction. They would move ever further east as the roads extended. In the process, all but the fittest would expire 'through natural reduction' and the remnant would be subject to 'special treatment'. In the concentration camps, Sonderbehandlung or 'special treatment' was already a euphemism for execution. He then spelled out why: history showed that the survivors of the road-building programme could become the germ cell of a 'new Jewish revival'. So, although the evacuation was not intended to deliver Jews to their deaths immediately it would ultimately eventuate in the destruction of the Jewish people." (p. 456)*

Regarding those survivors, the [translation](#) of the Protocol entered into the record of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg actually states:

*"Under proper guidance, in the course of the final solution the Jews are to be allocated for appropriate labor in the East. Able-bodied Jews, separated according to sex, will be taken in large work columns to these areas for work on roads, in the course of which action doubtless a large portion will be eliminated by natural causes. The possible final remnant will, since it will undoubtedly consist of the most resistant portion, have to be treated accordingly, because it is the product of natural selection and would, upon release [bei Freilassung], act as the seed of a new Jewish revival."*

The phrase **upon release** means that these people will have to be kept detained, not killed (nor released). Cesarani of course, employing the standard sleights of the Holocaust historians, omits it. Nevertheless, he still admits:

*"There are numerous, puzzling features of the meeting in Wannsee. While mass killing using gas vans was already under way in Chelmno and an extermination camp, Vernichtungslager, with fixed-site gas chambers was under construction at Belzec in the General Government, Heydrich did not connect his plan with their operations – not even by means of cautious euphemisms. Then again, these murderous facilities could barely have handled deportees coming from all over Europe for 'special treatment'. In actuality, none of the killing sites that took shape over the following months was suited to the purposes laid out by the man directing the 'final solution'. Nor were many resources devoted to preparing for such a gargantuan enterprise." (p. 458)*

He also adds this highly illuminating statement:

*"Compared to the construction of coastal fortifications in north-west Europe, flak defences in the Reich, or practically any other aspect of the war effort, in material terms the war against the Jews was a sideshow. It was ill-planned, under-funded, and carried through haphazardly at breakneck speed." (p. 459)*

Yes, you read correctly. The war against the Jews was a SIDESHOW with no plan and no funds. And that's it! With no other commentary, Cesarani simply moves on.

### The Camps

Regarding the extermination part, that is, the death camps, Cesarani offers a very brief discussion of Chelmno, followed by Belzec with some more details and Sobibor a few pages later. A longer discussion is devoted on Treblinka while Auschwitz gets the largest share with several pages and quite a lot of details. But for the above, Cesarani has absolutely nothing new to contribute, relying mainly on other historians (Van Pelt, Piper, Arad, Browning, Longerich, etc) and occasionally calling out some witnesses, like the [not so credible](#) Rudolf Reder on Belzec or the [even more incredible](#) Filip Müller on Auschwitz. He also calls Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler:

*"The first successful escape with this end in mind was made by Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba, two Slovak Jews who had arrived in Birkenau in spring 1942. On 7 April 1944 they entered the partly built extension of Birkenau known as 'Mexico' and concealed themselves under a pile of timber. Their carefully thought-out plan was to remain in the hideout for three days until the Germans lifted the blockade around the camp that customarily trapped escapees. When the hue and cry died down, they made their move. Wetzler took with him the label from a can of Zyklon-B obtained at great risk by Filip Müller. Vrba, who had worked in the Canada compound for over a year and then in the registry office of the quarantine camp, carried in his head an astonishingly accurate summary of arrivals and the number of those murdered. After a walk lasting eleven days the pair reached Slovakia and made contact with the Jewish community, passing on all they knew and urging the Slovak Jewish leadership to inform the world." (p. 743)*

Unfortunately, Cesarani does not tell us anything more about this "astonishingly accurate summary," possibly because of the fact that the said report is [completely bogus](#).

As for Treblinka, Cesarani repeats the tall tales of Yankiel Wiernik, like the one about bodies used as fuel:

*"Dead bodies were heaped on top of the grille, and the pyre was then doused in petrol and set alight. Once there was sufficient heat the flesh began to thaw, then melt and produce fat that pooled at the bottom of the pit. 'It turned out that women burned easier than men,' Yankiel Wiernik remembered. 'Accordingly, corpses of women were used for kindling the fires.' When the fat ignited, the pyre generated enormous heat and consumed the carcasses that were tossed on top." (p. 641)*

There's an armchair historian for you. And as we have already noted, for Cesarani the extermination of the Jews was a sideshow and not the main goal of the Germans. So for the Hungarian Operation, when supposedly 400,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to Birkenau and murdered, he writes:

*"The deportation of Jews was routinely stopped to ensure that supplies flowed to the front but no military action was ever suspended to ensure that the shipment of Jews to the gas chambers continued without interruption. When the shortage of labour in the Reich became acute, the Jews were perceived as a valuable resource. The Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944 partly to get their hands on Jewish labour; military exigencies drove anti-Jewish policy, not the other way round." (p. xxxiii)*

So finally, how many Jews perished according to Cesarani? This is interesting. First, the six million figure is nowhere to be found (actually it appears once but refers to Germans). In the Introduction Cesarani writes that around 1.5 million Jews were shot on the eastern front while 960,000 were murdered at Auschwitz, although at the end of the book he puts the number at 900,000 (p. 747). Along with 1,700,000 Jews killed at the “Aktion Reinhard” camps and 97,000+ at Chelmno, this adds up to a number of around **4,200,000**. Meaning that according to the mainstream academics, we can rest assured that the 6,000,000 number is gone for good. Perhaps this will be the tactic from now on. Focus on the numbers piecemeal and avoid totals.

### **The Photos**

Suppose that a reader wants to get an idea about the book’s contents. He opens it and flips through the photos (48 in total). Here’s what he will find:

1. Hitler and Hindenburg shake hands at ‘The Day of Potsdam’ on 21 March 1933.
2. A stormtrooper enforces the boycott of Jewish shops, 1 April 1933.
3. [An anti-Semitic poster in a Berlin street].
4. A sign on the outskirts of a German village declaring that ‘Jews are our misfortune.’
5. Jews made to clean pavements in Vienna on 13 March 1938.
6. The mass arrest of Jewish men in Oldenburg, 9 November 1938.
7. The Horowitz Synagogue on Frankfurt’s Bornestrasse in flames...
8. The aftermath of ‘Kristallnacht’ in Magdeburg.
9. Medical examination of Jewish refugee children in the Netherlands, autumn 1938.
10. Jewish refugee girls from Germany being inspected by a British policeman, autumn 1938.
11. Raymond-Raoul Lambert [a French war veteran].
12. Norbert Troller [a Czech war veteran].
13. Philip Mechanicus [a Dutch journalist].
14. Ruth Maier [a schoolgirl deported to Auschwitz].
15. Abraham Krouwer, Abraham Asscher and David Cohen.
16. Victor Klemperer [a Protestant convert from Judaism who recorded daily life under the Nazis].
17. Philipp Manes [a German war veteran].
18. Hélène Berr [a student at the Sorbonne].
19. Mary Berg [a schoolgirl from Lodz].
20. Adam Czerniaków [Polish engineer and head of the Warsaw Ghetto].
21. The gate to the Riga Ghetto, from outside the ghetto fence.

22. Jewish children in Lublin ... c. 1941.
- 23 & 24. Scenes from a market in the Warsaw Ghetto ... early 1940s.
25. A Lodz Ghetto stamp, bearing a portrait of Chaim Rumkowski.
26. A workshop in the Lodz Ghetto, c. 1941–42.
27. A group of Jewish Latvian women forced to undress shortly before being shot by German troops in Liepaja, 15 December 1941.
28. A Jewish woman being abused during the pogrom in Lvov, 30 June to 3 July 1941.
29. Jewish women from Kishinev assembled under Romanian military guard.
30. Jews in the Kaunas Ghetto are boarded onto trucks during a deportation action .
31. The commandant of Sachsenhausen is greeted ... at roll call, February 1941.
32. Jewish prisoners at Drancy Internment Camp in Paris, 1942.
33. Members of the Ordedienst (Jewish Order Service) assist Jewish prisoners onto a deportation train in the Westerbork Transit Camp c. 1942/43.
34. Hungarian Jews rescued from deportation by Raoul Wallenberg, 1944.
35. A prison choir performing in a courtyard at Theresienstadt, c. 1943.
36. Jewish inmates of Theresienstadt, early 1945.
37. Aerial photograph of Auschwitz-Birkenau ..., 1944.
38. Hungarian women and children arriving at Auschwitz, May/June 1944.
39. An elderly Jewish man arriving at Auschwitz, May/June 1944.
40. A transport of Hungarian women arriving at Auschwitz, May/June 1944.
41. Victims being selected at Auschwitz, May/June 1944.
42. One of the barracks at Bergen-Belsen shortly after the camp's liberation in 1945.
43. Female SS guards ... burying victims of Bergen-Belsen ... in a mass grave.
44. Aerial shot of the approaches to Treblinka, c. 1943.
45. Cover of the 1946 publication of Rudolf Reder's testimony from Belzec...
46. Displaced Persons' camp at Potsdamer Chaussee in Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1946.
47. Jewish detainees in a Cyprus internment camp ... 1948.
48. The first train carrying Jews bound for Palestine ... c. 1947.

Ten of these 48 pictures are of, or in, concentration camps. One picture's caption alleges that the subjects are about to be shot. No pictures of gas chambers, nor any even of crematoria. As can be seen,

the Holocaust is basically absent. This not at all surprising; all establishment historians employ the same tactic when it comes to photos. They either omit them entirely or show some irrelevant ones. Because they know that a picture is worth a thousand words. In this case, its absence is worth even more.

### Summary

The reader may have noticed that words like Holocaust, extermination or destruction do not appear in the book's title or even the chapters. This is supposed to be an all-encompassing work, including the Holocaust but not focusing too much on it. For Cesarani, even the word itself is out of date. In his own words "the term is arguably well past its sell-by date" (p. xxix). Revisionists would add "and not only that".

So, from the revisionist viewpoint, Professor Cesarani proves to be far less than a Goliath. His book is written in an easy-to-read style and it certainly serves its purpose to give an overall account of the fate of the Jews during World War 2, but when it comes to countering revisionism, there is simply nothing. Cesarani, as expected, keeps quiet about revisionists, and obviously cannot offer anything new even inadvertently nor covertly. On the contrary, his various omissions and even more his explicit declarations show his awareness that the official story is shaky and that the only thing historians can do to sustain it is recycle its dwindling content again and again hoping to keep this sinking ship afloat.

<b>Author(s):</b>	<a href="#">Panagiotis Heliotis</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Half-Way Revisionism: David Cesarani's Last Stand
<b>Sources:</b>	
<b>Dates:</b>	published: 2019-06-18, first posted: 2019-06-18 20:52:58

<http://inconvenienthistory.com/11/2/6767>